

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the property for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the property could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 123-5476
Property Name(s): <u>Virginia Avenue Elementary School</u>	
Property Date(s): <u>1939, 1955, 1963</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post Open to Public? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Property Address: <u>1000 Diamond Street</u> City: <u>Petersburg</u> Zip: <u>23803</u>	
County or Ind. City: <u>City of Petersburg</u> USGS Quad(s): <u>Petersburg</u>	
Physical Character of General Surroundings	
Acreage: <u>4.25</u> Setting (choose one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features: <p>The Virginia Avenue Elementary School is located on the west side of Diamond Street in the Petersburg, Virginia, residential neighborhood of Delectable Heights. The property encompasses 4.25 acres and is bound by Virginia Avenue to the north, Diamond Street to the east, St. Mark Street to the south, and High Pearl Street to the west. The school is centered at the eastern end of the block with a concrete path and stairs leading to its main entrance. A concrete block retaining wall extends along Diamond Street and flag poles flank the entrance.</p>	
Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property: <p>The remainder of the block behind the school is land used for recreational purposes; a chain link fence surrounds the back of the property enclosing a parking lot that doubles as a basketball court and a large grass field which includes a baseball diamond and sports pavilion. An abstract, stone sculpture, titled "Neighborhood and the School," was erected on the front lawn in 1994 and at the corner of High Pearl Street and Virginia Avenue is an engraved stone dedicated in 1986 to the Delectable Heights Reunion's feeling of "Love," "Togetherness," and "Unity."</p>	
Ownership Category: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	
Individual Resource Information	
What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc...	
<u>Elementary school for African-Americans</u>	
What is the current use? (if other than the historical use)	
<u>Not in use</u>	
Architectural style or elements of styles: <u>Colonial Revival</u>	
Architect, builder, or original owner: <u>Virginia Department of Education, Division of School Buildings</u>	
# of stories <u>2.5</u> Condition: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Rebuilt <input type="checkbox"/> Renovated	
Are there any known threats to this property? <u>Vacancy/Deterioration</u>	

Resource Component Information

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer "n/a." If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

Foundation: Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete. The original building has a continuous foundation constructed of red brick laid in a two-course Flemish stretcher bond; the northern and southern wings rest on continuous, brick foundations laid in two-course American bond.

Structure: Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known. The original building is constructed of cinder block and faced with brick. The southern and northern wings (constructed in 1955 and 1963 respectively) are constructed of poured concrete and cinder block which are faced with brick.

Walls: Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles. The school is faced with red brick. On the original building it is laid in a two-course Flemish stretcher bond with a row of soldier bricks demarcating the basement and first floor. The auditorium wing is faced with red brick laid in five-course American bond with brick buttresses located between the window bays. The later additions are faced with red brick laid in two-course American bond with a row of soldier bricks above the basement level. On the wings, a cast stone cornice wraps the facades keeping the same height and scale of the original building. Grated openings pierce the basement level on the wings.

Windows: Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced? The 1939 building has seventeen windows facing the front façade, these are the original paired, twelve-over-twelve, double hung, wood windows; fiberglass panels and screens currently conceal the upper sash. Beneath the windows are cast concrete sills and above the first floor windows are brick jack arches with a cast concrete keystone. The auditorium has three windows on both the northern and southern faces, these windows are large, multi-pane, steel, arched windows with brick arches and cast stone keystone and springs. Three dormers pierce the front façade of the hip roof. The dormers have six-over-six, double hung, wood windows, have wood siding, and are covered by front gable, metal roofs. The northern wing has four sets of windows facing the front façade; the window configuration appears as a quintuple window. The southern wing has no windows facing the front façade but has twenty-six facing St Mark Street. Most of the southern wing windows are configured in each bay to appear as a triple window with a continuous stone sill beneath. The more recent windows are steel, multi-light hopper windows, however, in both wings the middle windows have been covered up with fiberglass panels and the end windows been covered with shades.

Porch: Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details. The main entrance is centrally located and is adorned by a wood colonial revival style surround consisting of fluted pilasters upholding a simple frieze and segmental pediment. The recessed paired doors are topped by a seven-light transom and on either side are raised wood panels.

Roof: Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material. The original building is capped by a hipped roof covered by standing seam tin panels and is punctuated by three dormer windows. Adorning the roofline is a simple classically inspired cornice. The auditorium has a flat, built-up roof. The additions both have a flat roof and the roof line mimics that of the original building and is adorned by a simple cast stone cornice and coping.

Chimney(s): List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible. Located on the southern slope of the roof, at the northern end of the original building, is a tall corbelled brick chimney. The 1955 addition has a simple brick chimney and the school as a whole has multiple intake and exhaust vents.

Architectural Description of Individual Resource: *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated.)*

Exterior:

The Virginia Avenue Elementary School was built in 1939 as a two-story, T-shape plan with classrooms located on either side of a central corridor and a centrally accessed auditorium. Additions to the building were constructed on the southern and northern elevations in 1955 and 1963, respectively. The school is an excellent example of a Colonial Revival style construction and retains much of its original appearance and details.

The original school is a two-story, nine-bay, T-shape building constructed of cinder block and faced with red brick veneer laid in a two-course Flemish stretcher bond with a row of soldier bricks demarcating the basement and first floor. The main entrance is centrally located on the eastern façade and reached by concrete steps. It is embellished by a colonial revival style surround consisting of fluted pilasters upholding a simple frieze and segmental pediment. The school is labeled on the frieze as “VIRGINIA AVENUE SCHOOL” and hanging beneath the architrave is a sign that states “Through these doors walks the world’s best students: highly-motivated, well-disciplined, and our future productive citizens.” The recessed double leaf doors are topped by a seven-light transom and on either side are raised wood panels.

The east façade of the 1939 building has its original paired, double-hung sash wood windows with twelve-over-twelve lights, though they are currently largely concealed on the exterior by screens and fiberglass panels on the upper sash. Beneath the windows are concrete sills and above the first floor windows are brick jack arches with a case concrete keystone. Spanning the façade, and above the second floor windows is a shallow-molded, unadorned wood cornice. The hipped roof is covered by standing seam tin panels and is punctuated by three dormer windows. The dormers have six-over-six, double hung, wood windows, have wood siding, and are covered by front gable, metal roofs.

Centered on the rear (west) elevation of the school is a large auditorium. While on the original plans for the school, the auditorium differs slightly from the rest of the 1939 school in its roof, brickwork, and window design. The auditorium wing is constructed of cinder block and faced with a red brick veneer laid in five-course American bond with brick buttresses, capped with cast stone, located between the window bays. The windows are large, multi-pane, steel, arched windows with brick round arches and cast stone keystone and springs. A small, one-story room is located on the western end of the south elevation and two exits are located on the western façade of the auditorium, which are covered by a wood bracketed, shed roof.

The first addition to the school was added in 1955. It was added to the south elevation of the original school building and extended west along St. Mark Street. The wing consisted of ten classrooms, a library, and cafeteria. The cafeteria was at the west end of the addition and branched off to the north thereby creating an open courtyard with the addition on the west and south, original school on the east and auditorium on the north. Constructed of poured concrete and cinder block, it is faced with red brick laid in two-course American bond with a row of soldier bricks above the basement level.

The typical southern wing window configuration in each bay is a triple, multi-light hopper, steel window with a continuous cast stone sill beneath; the center windows are currently covered by a fiberglass panel. There are no windows on the front (east) elevation except for grated basement vents. Double, half-glazed, steel doors are located on the west and south elevations of the west end; these are covered by cantilevered awnings.

In 1963, a smaller addition was constructed at the northern end of the original school and had eight additional classrooms. Constructed of poured concrete and cinder block, it is faced with red brick laid in two-course American bond with a row of soldier bricks above the basement level. The window configuration on the northern addition is a quintuple, multi-light hopper, steel window with a continuous

cast stone sill beneath. The middle three windows of each set are currently covered with fiberglass panels and the end windows are covered with shades. The northern wing has one recessed entrance located on the northern façade.

While constructed at different times, both additions had similar designs and were sympathetic to the 1939 building in scale and design. Both additions protrude slightly beyond the front façade of the original building thereby framing the original school. While the wings are covered by a flat roof, a cast stone cornice wraps the facades keeping the same height and scale of the original building. The character defining features of the school's exterior include original details such as the main entrance, dormers, and window pattern. Additionally, the continuity of brick walls, wood and stone cornices, and window spacing communicate the evolution of the building.

Interior:

The Virginia Avenue School began in 1939 as a twelve-classroom school and was laid out with a two-story, T-shape plan. In 1955, a large wing was added to the southern end of the school, creating ten additional classrooms, a new library, kitchen, cafeteria, and additional office space. In 1962, another wing was added to the northern end of the school, creating an additional eight classrooms and an addition to the existing cafeteria and kitchen.

The original block of the school has a central corridor with classrooms located on both sides, and an auditorium opposite the main entry. Originally, open stairwells with large arched windows anchored each end of the hall. The auditorium originally functioned as a gymnasium and cafeteria too, as was a common multipurpose design at the time of the construction. Aside from classrooms, the second floor contained a small library and clinic on either side of the auditorium, and a principal's office above the entryway.

The central corridor walls are adorned with glazed brick tile and have recessed arches for drinking fountains. The staircases that were originally at either end had stone treads and steel railings and were later removed. Classroom doors consist of single leaf, wood panel doors with nine-lights in the upper half, topped by a three-light transom. These classrooms feature extensive woodwork including crown molding, chair molding, base trim, wood trim surrounding the blackboards, built in closets with paneled doors on tracks and brass hooks, and built in shelves with multi-light doors. The corridor and classroom floors have various sized asphalt and vinyl tiles.

The auditorium, located opposite the entry, is elevated by five steps and entered through three wood paneled doors with nine-lights in the upper half and covered by a seven-light transom. A large stage at the back of the auditorium is surrounded by wood paneling and draped by heavy curtains. The concrete block walls are adorned by wood wainscoting capped with molding that matches the window sills. The entire room has wood crown molding and base trim. Three large arched windows are on both northern and southern walls providing ample natural light.

The 1955 addition created a two-story wing attached to the southern end of the original building. The original staircase that had anchored the southern end of the original corridor was relocated to the interior corner between the original building and the 1955 addition. Another staircase of the same design was added to the opposite end of the new addition. The corridor runs east-west with classrooms located on the southern side of the corridor. A cafeteria and kitchen were added on the western end of the first floor and the previous library and clinic were turned into lavatories. A much larger library is located in the southeast corner of the second floor, attached to which is a work room and conference room.

Similar to the original building, the 1955 addition corridor walls are adorned with approximately 4 feet of glazed brick tile; however, the later tiles can be differentiated by their slightly lighter yellow color and variation in the curve of the top tile. Recessed into the walls are wooden display cases and space for drinking fountains, which have been removed.

The classroom doors in the 1955 addition have only three-lights in the upper half and are topped by a two-light transom. The extensive woodwork treatments from the original building were continued into the 1955 addition. Additionally, many classrooms have built in cabinets with sinks. The library has wall-to-wall wooden bookshelves and magazine racks and was designed with three skylights which still exist; however they are not visible due to the dropped ceiling.

The 1962 addition created a two-story wing attached to the northern end of the original building. The original staircase that had anchored the northern end of the original corridor was relocated between the original building and the 1962 addition and turned 90-degrees. The new corridor extends from the original building and has classrooms located on either side of the corridor. Also at this time, the existing 1955 cafeteria and kitchen were enlarged.

The 1962 addition corridor and stairwell were constructed with the same design and materials as the 1955 addition. The classroom doors in the 1962 addition vary slightly from the 1955 addition doors and are topped by single glazed transoms. The 1962 classrooms are less embellished than the earlier classrooms as they have concrete block walls, rubber wall base trim, drop ceilings, and carpeted floors. Some have built-in shelves beneath the windows sills and have built in cabinets with sinks.

While additions have been appended to the building and the function of some rooms has changed, the overall character of the Virginia Avenue School is retained and many original spaces, materials, fixtures, and finishes remain. The only documented renovations since the 1962 addition were in 1971, when the classroom adjacent to the principal's office was reconfigured to include an assistant principal's office, storage, and teacher's room.

The character defining features of the Virginia Avenue School interior, such as wall tile, stairwells, classroom doors, and woodwork details, exemplify the progression of design as the building expanded over time. Within the corridors, the original building smoothly transitions into the additions but can be noted by the slight change in tile color, further delineated by the placement of the stairwells between the original building and later additions. The classroom doors evolve throughout the various construction periods, beginning with multi-light panel doors and transoms, transitioning to horizontal lights in the doors, and lastly, to single-glazed transoms. Likewise, within the classrooms themselves the extensive woodwork and closets in the original building, transitions to woodwork and closets as well as sinks and cabinets in the 1955 addition, to simply sinks and cabinets in the 1962 addition. All of the above features retain high levels of integrity and illustrate the expansion of the school throughout the twentieth century.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property. (Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

The Virginia Avenue Elementary School is located on Virginia Avenue at Diamond Street in Petersburg, Virginia. It was originally constructed in 1939 with additions built in 1955 and 1963. The school is an exceptional example of an elementary school built using Depression-Era Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works aide.

The School is located in one of Petersburg's oldest neighborhoods, continuously and predominantly occupied by African Americans, Delectable Heights. The neighborhood was annexed to Petersburg in 1816 and was soon populated by a small community of free black property owners. Population of the neighborhood remained low until the early-twentieth century when the population of the city grew drastically and the street car was developed.¹

In the early-twentieth century, there were two African-American school districts in Petersburg; divided by Halifax Street, Delectable Heights formed part of the larger district.² Students within this district had three schools available to attend. These included Giles B. Cooke Elementary School (1923), Peabody Junior High School (1920), and Peabody High School (1920, DHR 123-5019), all located just west of Delectable Heights in the Gillfield neighborhood.³ These schools quickly became overcrowded, and in the mid-1930s the Petersburg School Board was able to take advantage of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works aide to construct a new elementary school for African-Americans. School construction in the state, and country, was vastly curtailed during the Great Depression prior to the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 which provided for the creation of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA). Understanding the importance of education in the country, school buildings were given priority, after water works and sewage projects, in awarding funds to non-Federal bodies.⁴ The Virginia Avenue Elementary School was the only completely new school building constructed in Petersburg using these funds.⁵

Designed by the Virginia Department of Education's Division of School Buildings in Richmond, Virginia Avenue Elementary School is in the Colonial Revival style, likely chosen as an echo of earlier southern colonial influences of Georgian or Federal styles common in the state. The school exemplifies the function and economy of design espoused during the Great Depression with its simplicity and classroom design and proportions. Chief among the elements deemed important in new school construction were large classrooms, auxiliary rooms to promote other forms of learning, such as a library, and auditorium to be used not only as a gathering space for those in the school but for the community as a whole.⁶ The Virginia Avenue Elementary School is an exemplary example of these ideals with its large classrooms and auditorium.⁷ Demonstrated by the dedication plaque at the rear of the property, Delectable Heights felt that the school was the nucleus of the close-knit community.⁸

Attendance in the area's African-American schools grew precipitously and by 1945 an addition to the Virginia Avenue School was being recommended.⁹ These additions did not take place until 1955 when ten classrooms, as well as a cafeteria and new library, were constructed. Understanding that the community was continuing to grow, officials had the forethought to acknowledge that a second addition would be necessary in the future. This second addition, of eight more classrooms, was added in 1963. Both additions mimic the original design of the School in terms of scale, materials, and classroom size. The department of education continued to purchase land until the entire block was occupied by the Virginia Avenue School providing the school and community with additional space.

As is clear by the sign above the main entrance of the school, "Through these doors walks the world's best students: highly-motivated, well-disciplined, and our future productive citizens," the school and surrounding community were devoted to empowering the students to achieve great heights in each child's

future. Among the most significant examples of this empowerment is seen in the success of Moses Malone, three-time NBA MVP and one of the sport's greatest players. It was on Virginia Avenue Elementary School's playground that Malone began to wholly concentrate on the game of basketball.

While the Virginia Avenue Elementary School was in service until 2006, its period of significance extends from its construction in 1939 until 1963 when the last classrooms were added. The school is significant as an excellent example of Depression-Era school construction in form and design and for its role played as the center of an African-American community. The School retains its historic integrity.

Legal Owner(s) of the Property (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

City of Petersburg

(Name)

135 N. Union St

(Address)

Petersburg

(City)

VA

(State)

23803

(Zip Code)

ddutton@dutton-associates.com

(Email Address)

804) 317-9660

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Owner's Signature: _____ Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: David Dutton, Dutton + Associates

Daytime Telephone: (804) 644-8290

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☒ Hon. ☐

Danielle Worthing, M.S.

Dutton + Associates, LLC

Dara Friedberg, M.S.

(Name)

812 Moorefield Park Drive, Suite 126

(Address)

Richmond

(City)

VA

(State)

23236

(Zip Code)

Dworthing@dutton-associates.com

(Email Address)

804.644.8290

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

William E. Johnson III

City Manager

(Name)

(Position)

City of Petersburg

(Locality)

135 N. Union Street

(Address)

Petersburg

(City)

VA

(State)

23803

(Zip Code)

(804)733-2301

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

The Petersburg Community Development Corporation (PCDC) is interested in using tax credits to create a community and recreation center.Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☐ No ☒

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- ¹ F.M. Wiggins, "Heights Holds Reunion," *The Progress-Index*. 5 September 2010. <http://progress-index.com/news/heights-holds-reunion-1.992909>
- ² The smaller district was Blandford, located northeast of Delectable Heights. Charles M. Robinson, *Petersburg Virginia Public Schools: Report & Survey of School Housing Conditions*. (Richmond, VA: W.C. Hill Printing, 1924), 16.
- ³ Ashley M. Neville, "Peabody Building of the Peabody-Williams School," *National Register Nomination Form*, 2000. On file at VDHR.
- ⁴ Arthur D. Gayer, *Public Works in Prosperity and Depression*. (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1935), 101.
- ⁵ Public Works Administration funds were also used in Petersburg to build an addition to Petersburg High School. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documentation, School Year 1929-1930, 1930-1931, 1931-1932, 1932-1933, 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1936-1937, 1937-1938, 1938-1939, 1939-1940*. (Richmond, VA: Division of Purchase and Printing).
- ⁶ C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), XXI.
- ⁷ The original school did have a small library located on the second floor. This was converted to a bathroom with the first addition in 1955.
- ⁸ Mary Ellen Bushey, Ann Creighton-Zollar, Lucious Edwards, Jr., L. Daniel Mouer, and Robin L. Ryder, *African Americans in Petersburg: Historic Contexts and Resources for Preservation Planning, Research, and Interpretation*. Presented to the City of Petersburg, Department of Planning and Community Development, 1994.
- ⁹ Lindley J. Stiles, Arthur M. Jarman, and B.J. Chandler, "Petersburg Survey Report," Report submitted to the Board of Education, Petersburg, VA. 18 November 1954.